
Overview of the challenges in governance for transparency, accountability, compliance and efficiency, and the proposed process to come up with recommendations for long-term improvements

1. The Executive Board at its 151st session in May 2022 decided, through decision EB151(1), to establish an agile Member States task group, open to all WHO Member States¹ and regional economic integration organizations, as appropriate, on strengthening WHO's budgetary, programmatic and financing governance (the "Task Group"). The Task Group will be invited to analyse the challenges in governance for transparency, accountability, compliance and efficiency, and come up with recommendations of long-term improvements. In line with the decision EB151(1) and to facilitate the deliberations within the Task Group, this document provides an overview of the challenges raised by Member States during the seven meetings of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing and other related governing bodies' processes.

2. This document also outlines the next steps for the Task Group to come up with recommendations for long-term improvements in strengthening WHO's budgetary, programmatic and financing governance. As mandated through decision EB151(1), the Task Group should report to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly, through the Executive Board at its 152nd session and the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board at its thirty-seventh meeting in January 2023.

MAIN CHALLENGES IN WHO'S BUDGETARY, PROGRAMMATIC AND FINANCING GOVERNANCE

3. In line with the mandate of the Task Group, the following section provides an overview of the main issues raised by Member States during the seven meetings of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing, largely summarized in the Recommendations of the Working Group to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly,² and other fora of Member States.³ The issues summarized have been organized by the broad themes of transparency, accountability, compliance and efficiency. The challenges have been also broadly grouped as within the sole remit of the WHO Secretariat or under a joint responsibility of the Secretariat and Member States. Some of the challenges presented might fit in

¹ Pursuant to Rules 3 and 18 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, this term shall be read to include Associate Members with respect to the Task Group.

² Document A75/9, Annex, Appendix 2.

³ For the purposes of clarity, the subparagraphs below refer, when applicable, to the closest official document in which the respective recommendation was raised.

more than one broad theme. The grouping in this document is used merely to facilitate further analysis and may be changed as Member States deem appropriate.

4. As an initial summary of the key elements raised by Member States, this document does not represent a set of agreed commitments between the Secretariat and Member States or the Secretariat's view on challenges raised. Instead, it is intended to serve as basis for initial discussion during the Task Group's first meeting, in which the Task Group will define the way forward and, by consensus, refine this overview and determine the elements to be given priority for action. For the final overview, to be developed throughout the work of the Task Group, it is expected that the Secretariat will provide feedback on the feasibility, as well as expected timelines, of implementation.

Transparency

5. The following actions lie within **the sole remit of the Secretariat**:

(a) improve the clarity and transparency of the development, monitoring and implementation of the Programme budget, based on best practices used in the United Nations system, including the following responses (document A75/9, paragraph 39(a)(ii), see also footnote 1 within document A75/9, paragraph 40):

(i) increase involvement of Member States in the development of the Proposed programme budget (document A75/9, paragraph 39(a)(iii));

(ii) improve and increase transparency of prioritization in budget development and processes, and improve priority setting (document A75/9, paragraph 39(a)(ii));

(iii) review the presentation of the Proposed programme budget with the aim of facilitating Member States' understanding and analysis of the information provided (document A75/9, paragraph 39(a)(ii));

(iv) establish periodic informal briefings for Member States (for example, quarterly) to provide information on the implementation of the Programme budget;

(v) provide executive summaries of the results report;

(b) revisit the review of WHO's administration and management costs reported to the Executive Board at its 133rd session in May 2013 (documents EB133/2 (section 4.2) and EBPBAC18/3);

(c) formulate guidelines for ensuring equity in resource allocation across all levels and departments of WHO (document A75/9, paragraph 39(g));

(d) establish a consistent and transparent approach to the establishment of new initiatives and programmes, including the related costing and future funding thereof and consultation with Member States (document A75/9, paragraph 39(a)(i)).

6. The following actions fall under the **joint responsibility of the Secretariat and Member States**:

(a) improve the alignment between programmatic priorities and corresponding financing within the approved Programme budget (document A75/9, paragraph 39(c));

- (b) use of guidelines and thresholds for earmarking of voluntary contributions and deadlines for achieving the thresholds (footnote 1 within document A75/9, paragraph 40);
- (c) strengthen the ability of Member States to monitor and contribute to the functionality and operations of WHO's regional and country offices.

Accountability

- 7. The following actions lie **within the sole remit of the Secretariat**:
 - (a) independently evaluate the results report, and consider recommendations for ways to improve the results report;
 - (b) regularly update the WHO investment case.
- 8. The following actions fall under the **joint responsibility of the Secretariat and Member States**:
 - (a) strengthen results-based management, including permanent review of performance and accountability and resource allocation based on priorities (footnote 1 within document A75/9, paragraph 40);
 - (b) implement transparent and effective sunseting for reporting requirements of governing bodies' resolutions and decisions;
 - (c) conduct a detailed analysis and review of the methodology for costing resolutions and decisions, which includes the participation of Member States (footnote 1 within document A75/9, paragraph 40).

Compliance

- 9. The following actions lie **within the sole remit of the Secretariat**:
 - (a) improve timeliness in delivery of documents to governing bodies (document A75/9, paragraph 39(a)(i));
 - (b) establish a reserve fund to bridge the funding gap caused by late receipts of funds, including those for emergencies;
 - (c) improve coordination of operations in the Organization to solicit funding of programmes and projects from donors;
 - (d) with regard to commitments asked of the Secretariat by Member States, establish a mechanism for providing feedback on whether these can be fulfilled.
- 10. The following actions fall under the **joint responsibility of the Secretariat and Member States**:
 - (a) standardize reporting procedures for small donors (footnote 1 within document A75/9, paragraph 40);

- (b) review and benchmark WHO's Financial Regulations and Financial Rules in order to align them with best practices used in the United Nations system (footnote 1 within document A75/9, paragraph 40);
- (c) review how to engage non-State contributors in discussions of the Proposed programme budget, in accordance with the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (footnote 1 within document A75/9, paragraph 40).

Efficiency

11. The following actions lie **within the sole remit of the Secretariat**:
 - (a) develop savings proposals and conduct an analysis of efficiency gains at all three levels of the Organization (footnote 1 within document A75/9, paragraph 40);
 - (b) explore the feasibility of a replenishment mechanism for financing of the base component of the Programme budget (document A75/9, paragraph 39(f)).
12. The **following** actions fall under the **joint responsibility of the Secretariat and Member States**:
 - (a) improve the effective role of governing bodies in prioritizing topics for inclusion on the provisional agenda of the Health Assembly (footnote 1 within A75/9, paragraph 40);
 - (b) strengthen the role of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board and the Executive Board itself, particularly in their budgetary oversight (document A75/9, paragraph 39(a)(iii)), in ways that advance the objectives of the Task Group.

NEXT STEPS

13. In decision WHA75(8) (2022) on sustainable financing, the Health Assembly decided to adopt the recommendations of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing, as set out in document A75/9, including the recommendation that the Health Assembly request the Director-General:

“to develop, and, in the light of the principle in paragraph 38(e), submit concurrently with the first proposed increase in assessed contributions to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly through the thirty-seventh meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, the 152nd session of the Executive Board and the thirty-eighth meeting of Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, an implementation plan on reform. This implementation plan should include progress to date on reforms as well as a preliminary timeline and required resources for implementation for additional reforms, including but not limited to budgetary, programmatic, finance, governance and accountability reforms within the remit of the Secretariat. The Secretariat commits to enact these reforms as soon as possible; to identify a clear set of deliverables for the biennium 2024–2025; and to report on these regularly.”

14. In addition, in decision EB151(1) the Executive Board decided that the Task Group would report to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly, through the Board at its 152nd session and the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee at its thirty-seventh meeting in January 2023, on recommendations on long-term improvements based on the analysis of challenges in governance for transparency, efficiency accountability and compliance.

15. The proposed process for the development of the Secretariat's implementation plan on reform and the Task Group's final report to the Executive Board at its 152nd session will follow the timelines reflected in document EB/AMSTG/1/3 Rev.1.

ACTION BY THE TASK GROUP

16. The Task Group is invited to consider and provide feedback on the initial overview of challenges presented and the proposed process and timeline.

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